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"THE DISCONTENTED WIFE"

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(Short 3 & 2 Version of
Fair and Warmer)

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Property of Johnnie Speer.

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"Fair and Warmer."

" THE DISCONTENTED WIFE "

CAST

BILLY CASTLE LIGHT COMEDY
HARRY HASTINGS FRIEND OF THE WIFE
JACK DAMERELL A NEIGHBOR

EISIE DAMERELL THE NEIGHBOR'S WIFE
LAURA CASTLE THE DISCONTENTED WIFE

SETTING

Library and reception room of the castle home. Interior.
with doors R. and L. and C. D. Big couch up L. Large rug in front of
the couch. Screen back in R. Table in front of screen.

PROPS

Victrola
Six quart whiskey bottles
Two wine bottles
Champagne Bucket
Two champagne bottles
One bottle of ginger ale
Large Rug
Slam door off R.
Telephone
Large tray.

" THE WEATHER MAN SAYS---"

LAURA

(ENTERS C. D. WITH HARRY) Oh, Harry, you shouldn't have tried to kiss me. like that.

HARRY

I'm sorry, Lauara, but I couldn't help myself. When you were dancing with me it took me back to the old days when we were something to each other. Just think you and I had proceeded so far in our love making that we actually began planning our little cottage, and where we were going to spend our honeymoon. I can't understand how you changed your mind and married Billy Castle instead of me.

LAURA

Well, Harry, you know in those days you were a pretty wild sort, and for that matter, you still are. I just thought that Billy was of a more sober and reliable nature and would make the best husband. But I could always have more fun with you than I ever could with Billy. Sometimes I'm awfully unhappy with him.

HARRY

Does he abuse you?

LAURA

Who, Billy? Why Billy wouldn't abuse the family cat.

HARRY

Does he booze stay away from home or chase women?

LAURA

Billy chase women. (LAUGHS) That's funny. And he won't even drink grape juice.

HARRY

Well if he doesn't drink or chase after women, what in heaven's name does he do.

LAURA

That's just it. He doesn't do anything. That's just what's the matter. Billy doesn't do anything a wife could find fault with him. He's perfect. Listen, Harry, perhaps it will sound ridiculous but I'll tell you that this is getting on my nerves. Billy is too good. Billy goes to work in the morning, and every day at noon he will call me up to know if I'm feeling good, if the weather is cold he wants to know if the flat is warm and cozy, if the weather is hot he wants to know if the electric fans are working, and if it's ~~skk~~ rainy weather, he cautions me not to go out without my rubbers. (ALMOST CRYING) Oh if I could only get Billy just mad enough to make him cuss. I'd really enjoy it.

HARRY

Doesn't he ever lose his temper?

LAURA

Say he wouldn't lose his temper if I pulled all the hair out of his head. Really I'd like to find out if Billy is human, if he would only get mad and swear at me once, and stay away late at night then I could think he was a man and not a mollycoddle.

HARRY

I have an idea! Billy knows that I tried to marry you once and that

you were half sweet on me at one time, why don't you make him² jealous. Now you go to me who the Claredon Ball tonight. Do you think that will make him jealous?

LAURA

Not in the least. Billy will be home in a few minutes. He always gets home at eight o'clock sharp. He's never one minute late. He'll come right in on the minute, walk in and say, "Good evening, dear, how are you feeling?" Then he will take his paper, sit down and the first thing he will do is look for the weather report; and then he will say, "The paper says that it will be colder tomorrow." Oh I can't stand it! The same old daily routine. And then he will sit around and promptly at nine thirty he will say, "I'm going to bed, dear." And then when he goes to bed---he--

HARRY

He what?

LAURA

He goes to sleep! Oh I'm telling you; it's terrible.

HARRY

Well, we'll break the monotony of tonight by going to that dance.

LAURA

No, Harry, it would be hardly right, besides people would talk. You know we've been around quite a bit lately together.

HARRY

Well, I must be going. If you change your mind in the next half hour, call me up at the club. Good bye! (EXITS C. D.)

LAURA

Oh I wish something would happen. (NOISE OFF STAGE) That's Bill now. (LOOKS AT CLOCK) No it's not quite eight and he wouldn't be one minute ahead of time. It wouldn't be him if it was.

ELSIE

(ENTERS C. D.) Oh, Laura, how are you? I came over to see if you were going to the Claredon dance tonight?

LAURA

I wanted to go, but you know how my husband is. He won't dance and he just sits in the corner like a big Hoosier. He never goes anywhere.

ELSIE

Quite different from my husband. He wants to go all of the time.

LAURA

Well, doesn't he take you with him?

ELSIE

Most of the time only when the lodge meets. Then he says I can't go. and I'm glad too for I like to stay at home.

LAURA

You ought to be married to Billy. He'd stay home enough to suit you.

ELSIE

Well, I don't think my husband would do anything wrong, only sometimes he stays out late, and some times when he comes home he can't walk very straight, and is just as likely to go to bed with his shoes on as

NOT. But then he says the boys induced him to take on a little too much when they initiated a new member in the lodge. I don't care so very much if he really enjoys it and really he doesn't do any harm. He is devoted to me. Jack wouldn't think of looking at another woman As long as he doesn't do that, I don't care. I have my home and that's a lot I tell you.

LAURA

I wish you and Billy had gotten married. You'd have had several homes by now; you both love them so well.

ELSIE

Well, I'll be running along now. Why don't you come up to see me? (LAUGH) It looks like when we are living in the same flat you might run up any time. Well, so long. (EXITS C. D.)

LAURA

That woman would be happy if she had my husband. (DOOR SLAMS OFF R.) Oh it's eight o'clock. I suppose that's he. I wonder if he brought his newspaper with him.

BILLY

(ENTERS C. D.) Good evening, dearie. (KISSES HER ON THE CHEEK) How are you feeling? (SITS AT TABLE AND READS) The paper says that it will be colder tomorrow--

LAURA

(THROWS BOOK ON THE FLOOR) Oh does it?

BILLY

What's the matter, dearie? Aren't you feeling well?

LAURA

Yes, I'm feeling well. Go on and read your paper. (LOOKS AT HIM) Oh what a man! Billy did you ever do anything wrong in your life?

BILLY

I've done several things wrong in my life, but I'm awfully sorry for it.

LAURA

Well, what was one of the things that you did that was so awful?

BILLY

Well, I parked my car down town near the court house, and you know it is only one hour parking there. There is a big sign that says one hour parking, and do you know what I done? I left my car there two whole hours

LAURA

Of course the cop tagged you?

BILLY

No, he didn't! He missed it some how or other, and do you know that I just took my car and drove right out of there, and never even told him about it.

LAURA

Terrible!

BILLY

I've been thinking however that I should go down to the police station and tell them of my error and pay my fine, and apologize for driving away

4

LAURA
(DISGUSTED) Oh good night. Billy, what would you do if I did something wrong? I mean something terrible? Would you get mad and raise the devil?

BILLY
Why no, dear, I'd be sorry for you and forgive you.

LAURA
Suppose it was something unforgivable--like--well suppose I should fall in love with another man?

BILLY
But you wouldn't, would you?

LAURA
Oh I don't know yet. You haven't answered my questions yet. What would you do if I was to elope with another man?

BILLY
I couldn't do anything, could I, dear?

LAURA
I expected you to say that.

BILLY
What else could I say?

LAURA
Oh get on with your paper.

BILLY
Aren't you feeling well, dear.

LAURA
Oh yes, I'm feeling well, dear. I'm going to the dance tonight with Harry Hastings.

BILLY
Harry is an awfully nice man, and I know you will enjoy yourself with him

LAURA
And you won't be just a little bit jealous? Hasn't it ever occurred to you that Harry and I are old sweethearts?

BILLY
Oh yes, but I know that you don't care for him or you would have never married me.

LAURA
Oh well since you don't care, I'll call him up. (AT PHONE) Bryant 211 --yes please--hello, Mr. Hastings, please---is that you, Harry? Come over right away, and we'll go to the ball--yes, I'll be ready right now. As a matter of fact, I'm ready now. (HANGS UP)

BILLY
Harry is a nice fellow.

LAURA
Think so?

BILLY
Don't you think so?

5

Oh yes! (KNOCK ON DOOR) That's him now. Come in. (JACK ENTERS) Oh good evening, Jack.

JACK
Hello, folks. What's the good word, Billy?

BILLY
Oh nothing new, I see by the paper that we are going to have a cold wave tomorrow. Have a seat, Jack, and I'll ringkd get something to drink for you. You know I never drink anything mus elf, but I like to have it about the house for my friends. (EXITS R.)

JACK
Poor Billy. I don't suppose he's ever done anything wrong in his life.-- I'll bet he doesn't even know what a good drink is like. But then I imagine he's an awfully good husband.

LAURA
That's the trouble; he's too darn good!

BILLY
(ENTERS R. WITH DRINKS) I was awful slow, wasn't I? (KNOCK ON DOOR)
That must be Harry now. Laura, do you want me to get your wraps?

LAURA
No, thank you. I have them here. Come in, Harry. (HARRY ENTERS)

BILLY
Hello, Harry, won't you join us? ---I mean Jack in a drink?

HARRY
the club. Ready, Laura.
He has a good time
with me, Billy.

BILLY
That's great of you, Harry. Laura, if it rains, don't get wet, I'll not wait up for you. I'll retire at 9:30. Good bye. (THEY START OUT C. D.)
Oh honey wait a minute. Hadn't you better take your rubbers?

HARRY
Never mind I've got some rubbers? (THEY EXIT LAUGHING)

***** NUMBER ONE *****

JACK
(ENTERS WITH BILLY) Billy, I want to talk to you. Did it ever occur to you that there are other things in life besides work?

BILLY
Why I--I never gave it much thought? What do you mean?

JACK
Did it ever occur to you that you may lose your wife? Don't you think that a woman expects something else of a man than to work for her?

BILLY
But I'm good to Laura.

JACK
That's the trouble, old man, you're too darn good. Don,

6
you know that a woman doesn't respect a man unless he's a little devilish once in awhile. Women want to be deceived one in awhile. Say, I'm going to tell you, something, old man, that maybe you don't know. Did it ever occur to you that you are doing wrong in letting your wife go with Harry Hastings so much? By doing what you done tonight you are losing your wife's respect and love.

BILLY

You mean Laura doesn't love me any more?

JACK

Well, I didn't say that, but I sure wouldn't let my wife Elsie go to a dance with Harry Hastings unless I was there on the side-lines with a shot gun in both hands. Now you can win Laura's respect back for yourself if you'd go to a club about three times a week, and get on a good toot---get soused. Say did you ever flirt with a woman since you have been married?

BILLY

A woman? Heavens no! I never thought of such a thing.

JACK

Well, it's time you got busy. Don't worry about your wife doing anything. She'd like it. Listen if she ever did find it out, you'd never know it. Look at me right now, my wife thinks I'm at a lodge, and I've got a date with a peach of a chicken tonight, and I'm going to have a good time too.

BILLY

But what if your wife finds it out?

JACK

Oh I'd swear it wasn't true and she'd pretend to believe me, knowing all the time I was lying. You see when I leave home I tell her I am going to the Mystic Shrine. And if I come home top heavy, I tell her we had to initiate a new member, I was riding the goat. Say you ought to join my club. Take a tip old man, if you don't wake up prettysoon and do something you are going to lose a mighty pretty wife.

BILLY

What will I do?

JACK

Well, for a starter---get soused--drunk--poop eyed.

BILLY

But I don't like whiskey.

JACK

Drink it any how, and then get mixed up with some woman.

BILLY

What woman?

JACK

Oh anybody--you see your wife trotting around with another man, you trot around with somebody's else's wife. You can come with me if you want to. I'll see if my girl hasn't got a sister.

BILLY

No---not tonight--I'll try it some night maybe.

JACK

Well, so long see you again, don't forget what I told you, never let a woman know what is going on, or know what you are doing. Get them wondering where you are at, and when your wife says she is going to pull another woman's hair out you can bet your bottom dollar she loves you. And if they catch you up to anything suspicious, deny it and pretend to be innocent, but grin when you are saying it and they will know that you are telling a lie. Well I'm goff, for my chicken dinner. (EXITS C. C.)

BILLY

I wonder--- he says get drunk and chase chickens. I don't want to do any thing like that. But I--I don't want to lose Laura either. *no 2*

ELSIE

(ENTERS C. D.) Oh hello, Mr. Castle, are you all alone?

BILLY

Yes, my wife went to the dance with Harry Hastings.

ELSIE

I think it's perfectly disgraceful the way your wife goes around with Harry Hastings and leave you here at home alone.

BILLY

Now don't talk about Laura; she's no worse than that husband of yours. He's gone to the Mystic Shrine.

ELSIE

Why certainly that's his lodge.

BILLY

Yes, his chicken lodge, he toled me so himself.

ELSIE

You mean other women?

BILLY

So he says. He tells you he's been riding a goat, when he gets drunk, but it aint goats he rides. He wanted me to go with him and meet a chickens sister at the Mystic Shrine. Hw just left a moment ago.

ELSIE

Oh the wretch! Just wait till he gets home.

BILLY

He told me you knew about it all the time.

ELSIE

And so he said he was going to meet another woman at the Mystic Shrine. Well, I won't tell that you told me, but my eyes are opened now, and I'm going to do something and you had better get busy too.

BILLY

What are you going to do?

ELSIE

Something devilish!

BILLY

All right, we'll both get devilish--what what are we going to do first? Jack told me that I ought to get devilish., He said for me to get drunk and chase chickens. I might get drunk, but I don't

8
want to chase any chickens. What will you do to get devilish?

ELSIE

I know what a woman does in a case of this kind; she gets compromised. Say you've got whiskey here. Get it all out, and we'll drink enough of it to have it on our breath. Then when they return we'll pretend to be drunk.

BILLY

Then Laura will love me. Here's lots of whiskey! and other drinks. Who will we open first? I don't know.

ELSIE

I either--I've seen Jack make them at home, we'll make a horse's neck.

BILLY

All right, do you know how to mix them!

ELSIE

No, but I'll try. Let's put some of this in it. (BUS.) and--(BUS) some of this.

BILLY

Here's some cherry wine. Put some of it in. it looks good.

ELSIE

Oh here's a pretty bottle. I mean its a pretty color, what is it? Vermouth--well it's a pretty color so we'll put it in.

BILLY

Sometimes Jack shakes it up, so we'll do the same. (SHAKE) Now let's taste it. (THEY DRINK) wonder how much we should drink?

ELSIE

Enoughto make our breath smell like whiskey and wine.

BILLY

Let me smell your breath. (SMELL) No I can't smell any whiskey. We'd better drink some more. (THEY BOTH DRINK BILLY GRINS) That wasn't so bad was it.

ELSIE

No, that's beginning to taste good.

BILLY

Say I got some champagne ~~and~~ in the other room. Let's try some of it too. Say let---let's make whoopee, what do you say?

ELSIE

Whoopee! I'll teach that husband of mine to go out with chickens and ride goats.

BILLY

I'm gonna get tooted! I'll make Laura love me! (THEY EXIT)

***** NUMBER TWO *****
***** 3

ELSIE

(THEY BOTH ENTER BOTTLES IN HANDS DRUNK) Say isn't this the greatest fun?

BILLY

Yes. I never knew what I been missin'.

ELSIE
Now when they come in we want them to think all kinds of things.

BILLY
Suppose they don't think all kinds of things, what will we do then?

ELSIE
Oh I know. I've got to be compromised. Can't you compromise me?

BILLY
I'll try.

ELSIE
I compromise awfully easy. You come over here and sit beside me and when we hear them coming, I'll lay my head on your shoulder, and they'll find us that way when they come in.

BILLY
All right. (DOOR SLAMS OFF STAGE) That's them now. (BILLY SITS SHE PUTS HEAD ON HIS SHOULDER SLIGHT PAUSE) They are slow coming up. I suppose it's someone on the next floor. Come on let's have another horse's neck.

ELSIE
No, we'll have some champagne, didn't you like that better?

BILLY
Yes, I suppose so. (AFTER DRINKS) I once read of a prince drinking champagne from a lady's slipper. I wonder if it would look worse if you were to put your slipper on the table, so I can pretend that I have been drinking out of it.

ELSIE
We'll try. (BUS. OF TAKING HER SLIPPER OFF AND PUTTING IT ON THE TABLE)

BILLY
Let's have another--(LAUGHS. BOTH DRINK. DOOR SLAMS. BOTH TAKE SOME POSITIONS ON COUCH. SLIGHT PAUSE. HE X'S TO DOOR AND LISTENS) We were fooled again. Come on let's have another drink. (BOTH DRINK) Wish Laura come in now! Come on let's dance! Let's do that dark foundation dance.

ELSIE
Dark foundation. What's that?

BILLY
The black bottom! (THEY DANCE) Whoopee. (GET SICK) Excuse me, but I think I had better go to bed.

ELSIE
I think I will too.

BILLY
But not here.

ELSIE
Why not. We couldn't accomplish anything if we didn't! I'll run upstairs and get my negligee and be down by the time they get here. (DRUNK BUS. EXITS)

BILLY
(STAGGERS TO TABLE) Horse's neck or champagne. (DRINK BUS.)

ELSIE
(COMES BACK WITH PAJAMAS AND NEGLIGEE ON ARMS,

BILLY

Hey, pick up that dress!

ELSIE

I won't do it. I'm gonna be compromised. Now you take off your---

BILLY

I aint gonna do it.

ELSIE

Go behind that screen I won't look. (PUTS ON KIMONA OR NEGLIGEE) And don't you look now!

BILLY

(GOES BEHIND SCREEN) I won't now! Something tells me we're in for a g good time. (HANGS PANTS ON SCREEN) Now I got 'em off!

ELSIE

Take 'em down off that screen and throw 'em on the floor.

BILLY

Nothin' doin', you pick up your dress and hang it up.

ELSIE

(STAGGERS) I can't do it! I can't lift my dress up.

BILLY

Well, then I aint gonna take my pants off this screen. You're drunk.

ELSIE

You're crazy. Say--we ought to makin' more whoopee. Let's have a party.

BILLY

Suits me!? You want to have a party?

ELSIE

Yes, let's a good time!2

BILLY

Well, I'll tell you what we'll do. You lift up your dress, and I'll take down my pants and we'll have a hell of a time!

ELSIE

Now, I'm gonna go to bed. I'm sleepy. Horse Neck 's are a pain in my neck. (LAYS ON COUCH GOES TO SLEEP)

BILLY

Well, if you're gonna go to sleep on me, I'm gonna dress again. Who the heck can compromise somebody when they go to sleep on ya? (PUTS ON PANTS. STAGGERS TO HER) She's drunk. (THROWS PILLOWS AROUND HER) I'm not drunk. I'm loope eyed. (SETS DOWN BY SETTEE AND GOES TO SLEEP)(BOTTLE IN HAND)

***** NUMBER THREE *****

LAURA

(OFF STAGE) Come right on in, Harry.

HARRY

(OFF STAGE) It's rather late. Perhaps I'd better not come in.

LAURA
Oh come. (THEY ENTER C. D.) I have something to eat for a little lunch. Now you sit down and I'll get you some wine and something to eat. Poor Billy's in bed long ago dear rascal. innocent rascal. (LOOKING OFF R.) Why the wine is all gone. (LOOKS ON TABLE) Some one has been drinking the wine. I suppose Billy had company. The poor dear! I'll bet he was bored. (PICKS UP SLIPPER)

HARRY
(LAUGHS) It looks as if Billy's company was of the feminine gender.

LAURA
A woman's slipper! Stop that laughing Harry Hastings. (SEES BILLY) Billy, what is the meaning of this?

BILLY
(DRUNKENLY) No dear, I haven't done a thing.

LAURA
I don't believe a word you say.

BILLY
(ASIDE) Jack said she would say that. (HARRY LAUGHS)

LAURA
Harry Hastings, leave my house at once. (HARRY EXITS LAUGHING) Now, Billy tell me what is the meaning of all this? What have you been doing, drinking?

BILLY
No, dear.

LAURA
I believe that you have.

BILLY
No, dear, you must say that you believe me and all the time you know that I'm lying. That will show that you love me.

LAURA
All right, I'll pretend that I believe that you are not drunk, but what is the meaning of this slipper?

BILLY
(GRINS) I don't know.

LAURA
I believe that too.

BILLY
I got her saying that she believed me all right.

LAURA
Don't sit there grinning like a chessy cat, Billy, have you got a woman in this room?

BILLY
No, dear.

LAURA
I wonder if you are lying?

BILLY
(LAUGH) Now I got her wondering. (KNOCK ON DOOR) Come in!

JACK
(ENTERS C. D.) Hello, folks, have you seen my wife. I just got home went up to our flat but she has gone out some where.

BILLY
Did you say something about the Mystic Shrine, Jack. Say I have been initiating a chicken---(STAGGER TO JACK) No--I mean a member. (BOTH LAUGH)

LAURA
Yes, and I came in and found him on the floor stupid drunk and a lady's slipper on the table where he has been drinking out of it. I'll look on the couch and maybe his mate is there.

BILLY
Jack, old boy, she believed me all the time I was lying.

JACK
Did you really have a woman here?

BILLY
Yes, and we had a fine time and she was a peach of a chicken too.

JACK
Bully for you! (STAGGERS. LAURA PULS PILLOWS AWAY REVEALING ELSIE. ELSIE SCREAMS A LITTLE) My wife! I begin to see now.

LAURA
(GETS SLIPPER) Madam, is this your slipper?

ELSIE
Yes!

~~MIDWINTER~~ JACK
What, you don't deny being here with this man and drinking with him?

ELSIE
No. I'm not going to lie like you.

JACK
Who told you that I lied?

ELSIE
Him! (POINTS TO BILLY) And we're partners in crime. He wanted to initiate a new member in the lodge, and I wanted to get compromised to get even with you and so we did.

LAURA
I'm going to pack my things and leave and you can settle, with that husband of mine any way you see fit. (EXITS OR D.)

JACK
Elsie, you go upstairs at once. I will settle with you after I've settled with this false friend. (ELSIE EXITS C:D.) Now, sir, what have you got to say for yourself?

BILLY
I'm much obliged old man, it worked fine. I believe I made her jealous.

JACK
Do you realize what you have done?

BILLY
I did exactly as you told me.

JACK
What!

BILLY
You told me to get drunk and lie to my wife and I did, and it turned out as you said it would.

JACK
Oh, darn you and your wife's affairs.

BILLY
And you told me to get mixed up with a woman and I did.

JACK
Yes, but think, think what it is to compromise a friend's wife.

BILLY
You said it didn't make any difference whose wife it was.

JACK
Oh if you were sober, I would shoot you. I'll settle with you in the morning when you have a little sense. We'll settle this in a different way. I'll see you in the morning, sir.

BILLY
He seems to be angry. I wonder why? Now there's me wondering and it should be Laura. (LAURA ENTERS) Baby, do you think I'm devilish?

LAURA
I think you are worse than that.

BILLY
Hurrah! She thinks I'm devilish I'm glad of that, Laura.

LAURA
Why you shameless creature, since you don't deny it, I'm going to my mother and what's more since the furniture is mine that goes too. Now, Mr. Castle, you'll see what your escapade has cost you tonite. (EXIT R.)

BILLY
It wasn't escapade, it was horses neck.

ELSIE
(ENTERS E. D.) Oh Mr. Castle, you must hide me. I'm afraid Jack will do something terrible.

BILLY
Well, he won't have the best of me. I've already done something terrible

ELSIE
(PUTS ARMS AROUND HIM) Oh you must do something!

LAURA
(ENTERS R.) So! Not satisfied with having her here all the time I was gone, you had to bring her back. I'll sue you for a divorce if it's

last act I do. I will! I will!

BILLY

No, Laura, if you are determined to leave me, I'll spare you the humiliation of the courts. I'll get the divorce myself.

LAURA

So you want to get rid of me, do you? Well, I won't go! I'll stay right here! (BILLY FALLS IN CHAIR. JACK ENTERS R.)

JACK

I want to explain, Mrs. Castle, that this is all a joke tonite and all my fault, my wife thru jealousy acted the way she did, they both were trying to make us jealous. And I put the idea into Billy's head. Really there's no harm done. Is there, Elsie?

ELSIE

No, honey. I don't think he could hurt any one.

JACK

I forgive my wife, and I hope she forgives me, and I hope you forgive your husband, Mrs. Castle. I advised him to do what he done because you were going out and leaving Billy alone and didn't appreciate a good husband, and I didn't appreciate a good wife.

LAURA

I think you are right. (X'S PUTS ARMS AROUND BILLY'S NECK) I'm going to stay at home with Billy after this, and you stay at home with Elsie. Billy what does the paper say?

BILLY

I think the weather is going to be rather uncertain!

F I N A L E